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ABSTRACT

To investigate the relationship between soap opera viewership and sexual and relational perceptions, telephone interviews were conducted with 209 female college students. Quota sampling was used to complete a ratio of two telephone interviews with soap opera viewers for every one with a nonviewer. For sampling purposes, a viewer was defined as someone who watched soap operas in the daytime at least occasionally. In addition to recording demographic information about the respondents, the interview instrument tapped perceptions of the salience of sexual activity, the frequency of premarital and extramarital sex, marital stability, pregnancy and complications, society's permissiveness, working women, and the realism of soap operas. Results showed that viewers and fans differed in the extent to which they used soap opera content to understand sexual and romantic relationships. Yet their perception of content utility did not influence their beliefs about real-world sexual activity and permissiveness. No significant patterns emerged either between their estimates of the extent of premarital sex, illegitimacy, extramarital sex, sexual permissiveness, and divorce or their own attitudes and behavior regarding sex and marriage. These results fail to establish whether individual sexual attitudes or values are influenced by soap portrayals. (HOD)

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SOAPS, SEX, AND COLLEGE WOMEN

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SOAPS, SEX, AND COLLEGE WOMEN

In one of the more shocking and sobering recent studies of sex and the media, Zillmann and Bryant (1982) demonstrated that "massive" exposure to pornography (4 hours and 48 minutes over 6 weeks) resulted in subjects recommending significantly shorter prison terms for rapists, indicating less support for the women's liberation movement and, among males, increased "sexual callousness" toward women. In addition, the controlled exposure to pornography in three experimental conditions (massive, intermediate, and no exposure) displayed significant positive linear relationships between exposure and estimates of the percentage of adults practicing common and uncommon sexual behaviors including fellatio/cunnilingus, anal intercourse, group sex, and sadomasochism, as well as perceptions of general levels of adult sexual activity. Exposure was also related to finding pornography less offensive and recommending fewer broadcast restrictions including access by minors. All erotic films used were heterosexual and none entailed coercion or deliberate infliction or reception of pain.

Most media sex falls short of pornography; but the dramatic demonstration of impact on sexual perceptions and attitudes suggests the possibility of impact from less explicit content. Some impacts have been demonstrated. Greenberg, Perry, and Covert (1983) found that factual learning occurred among 5th and 6th graders from classroom exposure to half hour CBS specials ("Facts About Boys"

and "Facts About Girls"). Sexual attitudes of the children who watched the shows (e.g., a girl who is physically ready to bear a child may not be ready in other ways; people do not need to be in love to have sex) were closer to the attitudes espoused by the programs than were the control group's attitudes. Gebhard (1977) reanalyzed data from the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research and added a contemporary sample of respondents. He found that the current generation of males more often cites mass media as an initial source of sex information, particularly with regard to knowledge about prostitution, homosexuality, and coitus.

Baran (1976a, 1976b) hypothesized a negative relationship between the perceived reality of TV and movie portrayals of sex, perceived character enjoyment of sex, and perceived character sexual prowess--all with personal sexual satisfaction. Among high school students, initial coital satisfaction was negatively correlated with perceptions of TV characters' sexual prowess ($r = -.21$) and pleasure ($r = -.31$). There was no relationship between satisfaction with virginity and TV perceptions at that age level. College students who perceived media characters to have greater sexual prowess also report lower initial coital satisfaction ($r = -.17$), and virgin college students who perceived TV characters to derive greater sexual pleasure were less satisfied with their virginity ($r = -.33$). For both age groups, perceived reality of TV sex was unexpectedly positively correlated with initial coital satisfaction, and for college students, perceived reality was also correlated with coital satisfaction "now" ($r = .19$), suggesting that the negative impact on satisfaction may only apply to the initial coital experience.

TV Viewer (1980) reports a study with behavioral implications. A group of pregnant teenagers in a training program for unwed mothers was compared to a group of non-pregnant teens in a youth group. Those who reported that their

favorite character would not use birth control if involved in premarital sex were 2.4 times as likely to be pregnant. The pregnant teens watched more TV (20 hours per week vs. 13), identified more with romantic characters, and were more likely to agree that TV is similar to real life (70% vs. 30%).

Two recent studies address the impact of soap opera viewing on estimates of real occurrences of sex, relationships and their accompanying complications. Greenberg, Buerkel-Rothfuss, Neuendorf, and Henderson (1982) found no relationship between amount of soap viewing and estimates of the severity of problems of health, romance and marriage in this country, in a randomly selected sample of 405 adult women. Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981) tested 290 college students, finding that soap viewers estimated more occurrences of divorce, illegitimate children and abortions than did nonviewers. These relationships remained significant controlling simultaneously for grade pc nt average, class, age, sex and self concept. Estimations of the number of affairs by males and females and the number of people happily married were not significantly different between soap viewers and non-viewers.

Thus, there is some support for impact of media sex portayals on attitudes, perceptions, and perhaps behavior. There is mixed and limited evidence concerning the specific impact of soap opera portrayals. Sex on soap operas has been included in at least 8-9 content analyses (qualitative and quantitative). On the basis of the information which has been compiled, it is possible to generate a set of expanded, specific hypotheses about likely impacts of exposure to sex on soaps.

Lowry, Love and Kirby (1981), Greenberg, Abelman and Neuendorf (1981) and Greenberg and D'Alessio (1983) each focused specifically on content analysis of sex acts on soaps. Lowry et. al. coded 1 week (50 hours) of soaps in 1979, counting 329 codable sex acts (6.58 per hour). Their coding system treated

multiple occurrences of an ongoing sex act or discussion as separate acts (e.g., "an erotic kiss that also involved an embrace counted as two instances of erotic touching if both acts met the basic requirements" p. 92). In both Greenberg studies, a sex act/reference "began with a physical or verbal display of a category and ended with the completion of the act category, a new character entering the scene, or a change of scene" (p. 85). Thus, fewer acts per hour were found. Greenberg et. al. counted 2.0, 2.28, and 1.80 in 1976, 1979, and 1980 respectively. Greenberg and D'Alessio found approximately 4 sexual acts/references per hour in 1982.

There is strong agreement across all three studies that more sex acts occur between people not married to each other than between marital partners. Lowry et. al. report 18% of the acts of erotic touching and 32% of the acts of heterosexual intercourse occurred between marital partners. Greenberg et. al. found 35% of all petting and 6% of heterosexual intercourse to occur between marital partners. Greenberg and D'Alessio report 20% of heterosexual intercourse occurring between marital partners; 20% of intercourse partners were married to someone else.

Behaviors by act category were examined in each analysis:

	Lowry	Greenberg[1]	Greenberg[2]
Intercourse	31%	23%	65%
married	(10)	(5)	(13)
unmarried	(19)	(18)	(52)
?	(2)		
Petting/ Erotic Touch	43%	44%	16%
Prostitution	3%	5%	8%
Rape/ Aggressive Sexual Contact	22%	12%	3%
Other	--	16%	8%
Total acts	329	130	110

No instances of homosexuality were found. Lowry also looked for masturbation and incest, finding none. Most sex acts on soaps are heterosexual intercourse or foreplay. Prostitution is relatively rare. The amount of rape varies strongly by study; perhaps when a soap rape occurs, it is talked about extensively.

A final, strongly held common finding among the studies was that sex on soaps consists predominantly of verbal references, not explicit visual demonstrations. It is far removed from the realm of pornography. Lowry et. al. report 47% of all acts included some visual erotic touching; 7% of acts coded as intercourse had a visual component. Greenberg et. al. found 51% of the sex scenes to have a visual component, and 12% of the acts coded as intercourse. Greenberg and D'Alessio counted approximately 35% of sex scenes with a visual component, and 21% of the acts of intercourse. In a qualitative analysis of the 68 acts of intercourse, they note that visually implied intercourse tends to be a scene with a couple in bed together, "after the fact." They point out that while content analysis count absolute occurrences of references to and scenes showing sex acts, many of the verbal references are denials, wishful thinking, and rejection of the act.

> "At least one fifth of the references to sex consisted of rejecting the idea, at least for the time being (e.g., 'Mark and I do not need sex to enjoy each other.'. . ." (p. 10). Another common form was expressing a desire for sex, "but with no apparent evidence or implication that it happens (e.g., 'I'd like to wake up with you in my arms . . ." (p. 11).

These studies provide a census of soap occurrences of specifically defined sex acts. Other analyses, although they do not center on sex acts, provide a context and description of the complications which accompany sex on the soaps. Three content analyses focused on soap problems and topics of conversation. Katzman (1972) conducted the first problem study of the 1970 soap season.

Greenberg, Buerkel-Rothfuss, Neuendorf, and Henderson (1982) updated and extended that analysis for 1977; and Fine (1981) conducted a similar study examining conversation content. Marriage was the locus of 29% of 1970's soap problems and 28% of 1977's soap problems, the most common source being infidelity. Marriage was a topic in 22% of all conversations in Fine's tabulation. Romance (between people not married to each other) was the locus of 7% of 1970 problems and 11% of 1977 problems, the most common of which was a split between an old and new romance. Romance between unmarrieds was a topic in 19% of conversations. These are not necessarily references to sex acts, nor do they exhaust the list of problems or topics which relate to sex acts. But they do establish sexually-oriented relationships as a central concern of soap plots. Greenberg et. al. note that:

> "by 1977, some unique problem situations appeared which did not happen earlier, and they centered on sex. There was sex-related illness, e.g., sterility; sex-related medical problems, e.g., miscarriages and abortion; sex-related crime, e.g., rape; and sex problems in marriage, e.g., impotency." (p. 528)

Maykovich (1975) and Ramsdell (1973) conducted qualitative analyses which further describe the complications and circumstances which accompany sex on the soaps. Extra-(and/or un-)marital sex has already been established as common in soaps. Maykovich reports that "casual encounters with attractive sex objects may lead to EMS even if the marital life is relatively satisfactory." (p. 143) She notes that triangular romantic relationships often arise out of accidental appearances and disappearances of partners presumed dead. "Poor marital relations" in the form of personality incompatibility, work-versus family conflict, lack of love shown by one spouse, step child problems and financial difficulties are all condusive to EMS. Both Makovich and Ramsdell note that females working outside the home "bring trouble on themselves" and "are not dealt with gently."

Although EMS occurs frequently, Maykovich points out that when a husband or wife discovers EMS, they do not tolerate its long term continuation. Often the difficulties within the marriage are worked out and the EMS partner discontinued. The EMS partner then typically becomes independent or falls in love with someone else. The message conveyed about EMS may be a mixed one: it occurs frequently, but is corrected (and not condoned) when discovered.

Finally, there is the sex-complication of pregnancy, legitimate and illegitimate. Cassata, Skill and Boadu (1979) counted 19 pregnancies over a year of soap operas. Eight resulted in miscarriages (a 42% fatality rate for unborns), and three would-be mothers died (a 16% fatality rate for pregnant women). Diseases of the reproductive organs were the third most common ailment (among males and females combined). They note that few of the pregnancies occurred under happy circumstances.

Ramsdell found that two thirds of all children born on the soaps she analyzed were conceived through EMS. Greenberg et. al. report that at least 16% of male parents had illegitimate children. Two messages seem quite clear: sex results in pregnancy, and pregnancy is complicated and dangerous.

Based on these content analyses, hypotheses were developed about the relationship between amount of soap viewership and sexual and relational perceptions ("cognitive sex").

H_1: Heavy soap viewers will perceive that people talk and think about sex more often.

H_2: Heavy soap viewers will perceive sex as being more important.

H_3: Heavy soap viewers will estimate that more men and women engage in premarital and extramarital sex.

H_4: Heavy soap viewers will have bleaker images of marriage, estimating shorter marital longevity, more serious problems developing in romances, more divorce, and fewer marriages occurring for love.

H_5: Heavy soap viewers will estimate more illegitimate births, more marriages because of pregnancy, and more babies and mothers dying during childbirth.

H_6: Heavy soap viewers will perceive greater social permissiveness toward premarital and extramarital sex, illegitimate births, and divorce. (Social permissiveness toward prostitution and homosexuality should not differ by exposure.)

H_7: Heavy soap viewers will estimate fewer successful career women who also have successful marriages.

H_8: Heavy soap viewers will believe that more women are raped.

METHODS

A random sample of female students enrolled at a large midwestern university was selected from the student directory. Quota sampling was used to complete a ratio of two telephone interviews with soap viewers for every one with a non-viewer. For sampling purposes, a viewer was defined as someone who watched soap operas in the daytime at least occasionally. The telephone interviews were conducted by 60 trained student interviewers as part of a class on the impact of soap operas.

Two hundred and nine surveys were completed; 71 respondents never watched any soaps and 138 were at least occasional viewers. Soap viewers were grouped into "fan" and "viewer" categories for analysis. The 68 coeds who watched more than 3 soap episodes each week were considered fans. The 70 students who watched 3 or fewer soap episodes each week, but did watch at least some soap on occasion were labeled viewers.

The instrument tapped the salience of sexual activity, the perceived frequency of premarital and extramarital sex, marital optimism, pregnancy and complications, beliefs about society's permissiveness, working women, soap viewing characteristics and demographics. All estimates referred specifically to the U.S.

Salience of sex. Respondents were asked how many times per day the average

person thinks and talks about sex. Perceived importance of sex to teenagers, to adults, and to society was rated.

Premarital and extramarital sex. Respondents estimated how many men and women out of 100 were likely to engage in premarital and extramarital sex, and how many would engage in extramarital sex if the opportunity arose.

Marital Optimism. Respondents indicated how many years they thought the typical marriage lasts, how many marriages out of 100 occur for love, how many marriages end in divorce and how many romances develop serious problems.

Pregnancy and complications. Estimates of the number of illegitimate births, the number of marriages occurring because of pregnancy and the number of mothers and infants who die during childbirth were collected.

Social permissiveness. Respondents were asked whether or not they felt society was becoming more permissive toward prostitution, homosexuality, abortion, illegitimate births, divorce, and premarital and extramarital affairs.

Working women. Estimates of the number of extramarital affairs was asked separately for working women and housewives. Respondents were asked what percent of successful career women also have successful marriages.

Rape. Estimates of how many of every 100 women are raped were assessed.

Soap viewing characteristics. Respondents who ever watched soaps were asked how useful they found soap portrayals of romantic relationships, marriages, family relationships, sexual relationships and romantic problems, and how real to life they found soap problems and portrayals of career women, housewives, romantic relationships, marriages, families and extramarital sex. To further clarify their involvement with soaps, they were asked how many years they had been watching soaps, whether they watched alone or with others, whether they

planned their class schedule to be able to watch soaps, and whether they tried to find out what happened when they missed an episode.

Demographics. Year in school, marital status, residency on or off campus and employment were assessed.

Fans, viewers and nonviewers surveyed were predominantly single (94%, 83% and 93%, respectively). Fans were most likely (60%) and viewers least likely (40%) to live in a dorm, with nonviewers in between (54%) ($p < .05$). There was no difference by class standing. Few students worked full time. Fans and viewers were more likely to work part time (59% and 51%) than nonviewers, (39%) ($p < .05$).

One-way analysis of variance was used, comparing means for fans, viewers and nonviewers along each of the dependent variables.

RESULTS

General Hospital was watched by 60% of the students who ever watched soaps, All My Children by 49%, and One Life to Live by 43%. No other soap was watched by more than one-fourth of student soap viewers. Among non-soap viewers, 32% did not watch because classes interferred, and 23% did not watch because they disliked soaps.

Soap Viewing and Attitudes.

Soap viewing characteristics are reported in Table 1. Viewers watched an average of 2.3 episodes from 1.5 different soaps per week. - Fan watched 7.3 episodes from 2.5 soaps. Both differences are statistically significant. In terms of overall television viewing, fans were the most likely to have their own TV set (87%) and watched significantly more television (2.2 hours/day) than viewers, 75% of whom had their own TV, and watched 1.3 hours per day. Viewers were more involved with TV than non-soap viewers (63% owned a TV set, watching .8 hours/day). Daytime soap fans were also the largest evening soap fan

group (65%), followed by soap viewers (45%), and daytime soap non-viewers (36%).

One tenth of viewers and one fifth of soap fans planned their class schedule around soaps. Both groups reported having watched soaps for many years--an average of 6 for viewers and 5 for fans. Soaps typically were watched with other people (78%). Fans were more likely to indicate that soaps were important to them (averaging 2.2 on a four point scale, with very important being four) than viewers (1.6), although neither group rated soaps as particularly important. Sixty-one percent of fans tried to find out what happened when they missed an episode, compared to 37% of viewers.

Perceived utility and perceived reality results are in Table 2. Viewers and fans did not perceive soap content to be particularly useful to them, with average ratings ranging from a low of 1.7 to a high of 2.4, where 5 was "very useful." Fans did rate soaps as significantly more useful overall (based on an additive index) and for information about sexual and romantic relationships. All items showed the same directional difference. Perceptions of the reality of soap opera portrayals also never averaged as high as the midpoint on a five point scale. Viewers and fans did not differ in their estimations of the unreality of soap portrayals of extramarital sex, romance, marriage, families, housewives, career women, and problems in general.

Salience of Sex

There were no significant differences among fans, viewers and non-viewers along any of the salience of sex measures. Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported. Results in Table 3 indicate that college coeds believe the average person thinks about sex 8-9 times a day and talks about sex 5-7 times a day. In the opposite direction of what was predicted, fans showed the greatest discrepancy between thinking and talking about sex, believing that people think

about sex 4 more times per day than they discuss it, while viewers and non-viewers refrain from discussing it only twice a day, when it comes to mind.

Sex was seen as slightly more important to adults and to society than to teens--in all cases rated approximately 3 where 4 is "very important."

Premarital and Extramarital Sex

Table 4a shows no significant differences by amount of soap viewing. More single men were believed to engage in premarital sex (81-85%) than single women (65-73%), although in all cases a majority of singles were thought to partake. At least half of all married men (51-54%) and about two fifths of married women (37-41%) were considered likely to engage in extramarital affairs if the opportunity arises. The number that will actually end up having an affair is somewhat lower: about 40% of married males, 33-37% of married career women, and 28-33% of married housewives. Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Marital Optimism.

Contrary to the expected direction, there is a significant non-linear relationship between soap viewing and estimates of the longevity of marriage (see Table 4b). Fans had the most optimistic view of marriage, estimating it to last an average of 36 years. Nonviewers were somewhat bleaker--29 years; and viewers the bleakest--23 years. None of the other results are significant, but the trend seems to continue. Fans estimated a slightly larger percentage of marriages occurring for love, slightly fewer romances developing serious problems, and slightly more women successful at both career and marriage than viewers or fans, as well as somewhat fewer marriages ending in divorce than viewers. Hypothesis 4 is contradicted.

In general, about three fourths of marriages were perceived by coeds to occur for love; 40-45% end in divorce; and 64-68% of romances develop serious problems.

Pregnancy and Complications.

Conception outside of marriage was seen as very common by respondents, regardless of soap viewership (Table 4c). At least 20% of all births in the U.S. were believed to be illegitimate. In addition, 21-25% of all marriages were thought to occur because the woman becomes pregnant. Pregnancy is perceived as a dangerous situation: 4% of pregnant women were thought to die during childbirth, as well as 7-9% of infants. Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Social Permissiveness.

No significant differences were found in perceptions of increasing social permissiveness regarding various sex-related practices. Hypothesis 6 is not supported. Divorce and premarital affairs were the most widely agreed upon arena of liberalization (see Table 5), by more than 90% of respondents. Abortion, extramarital affairs, homosexuality and illegitimate births were believed to be more socially permissible by at least 70% of respondents. Only prostitution maintained its traditional negative social sanctions in the minds of about 60% of the students surveyed.

Other

Hypothesis 7 predicted a more negative and jaded image of career women among heavier viewers. Table 4 shows soap fans estimating that one third of married career women and one third of married housewives are likely to have affairs. Although not significantly different, fans rated housewives as more likely to have affairs and career women as less likely to have affairs than did viewers and non-viewers. Continuing this trend for fans to have a better image of career women is their slightly higher estimate of the percent of women with successful careers and marriages (56%) compared to viewers and non-viewers (47%, 52%) (Table 4b). Hypothesis 7 is contradicted.

Finally, estimates of the percentage of women likely to be raped (18-21%) did not differ. Hypothesis 8 is not supported.

DISCUSSION

Viewers and fans of soap operas--college women--differed in the extent to which they found soap content useful to them in terms of information about sexual relationships and romantic relationships. Yet perceived utility of the content did not carry over to their beliefs about real-world sexual activity and permissiveness, i.e., fans and viewers did not differ from each other, nor from non-viewers. Not in their estimates of the occurrence of premarital sex, illegitimacy, extramarital sex, sexual permissiveness, divorce, nor the sheer importance of sex were significant or consistent patterns of differences obtained among these three student groups. Marital happiness estimates and perceptions of career women ran counter to predictions.

Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes (1981) also found no difference between their college student viewers and non-viewers in the estimated occurrence of real-life affairs among either men or women, nor any difference in the estimation of happily married folk. Although their major findings related to consistent differences in the perceived composition of the work force in this country, they also reported significant differences in the estimates of illegitimacy and divorce in the general population, and this was not obtained in the present study. The incidence of abortions also was more prevalent among their viewers and not assessed here. Both studies used college students, similar measures of viewing and parallel methods of estimating real-world activities. They differed in that the present study used a random sample of female students (vs. intact classes of both sexes), trained interviewers (vs. self-administered forms), subdivided viewers (vs. all viewing levels in a single category) and focused the entire interview on issues related to sex in the soaps (vs. a major

emphasis on gender issues and a minor one on sexual issues). Among these differences, the last may have stronger merit--several pages of questions almost exclusively about sex may trigger defensive reactions from a group of college females.

Clearly this study probed deeply into the sexual beliefs of its sample, as to what it's like 'out there.' The results taken at face value vindicate soaps as a source of information any different in impact from whatever sources are utilized by non-viewers, and any different in impact between more casual and habitual viewing of this genre of content. All respondent groups are remarkably similar in how much they think these activities occur, how important they are, and what this society's tolerance level is. Soaps cannot be castigated for influencing these sets of cognitions, at least from these data.

Why not? Why don't soaps contribute to larger estimates of promiscuity, unhappy marriages, sordid affairs and other manifestations of a more sexually permissive society? Although some explanations could begin with the age/sex group studied here, let us instead focus on the content of interest, what sex is like in the soap operas. First it is tepid by contrast with a slew of R-rated movies available, or steamy paperbacks and magazines. No soap contains the explicit sex found in such movie favorites as "Saturday Night Fever" and "An Officer and a Gentleman." No soap contains the prevelence of sex available on primetime television, nor that of cable movie channels or specific adult cable movie channels, like the Playboy Channel. To the extent these media offerings cut across soap viewers and non-viewers--a fact not established in this study or elsewhere--it should not be surprising that soaps demonstrate no additional impact. Second, sex in the soaps is primarily verbal, rather than pictoral. People on soaps talk about it far more often than they do it; indeed,

it is likely that college students also still talk about it far more often than they do it regardless of their proclivity to soaps. Soap characters talk of 'going to bed,' 'making love' and 'having affairs,' but talk is cheap and need not translate into expectations that such talk begets the behavior. Third, soaps proclaim mixed value messages about sexual activity. A goodly portion of the talk of sex in the soaps is about not having sex. Offers and advances are spurned with considerable regularity; although this is not so frequent as acceptances, nevertheless, the sum of the messages is not uniform in their advocacy. Many characters say no, and still others fantasize about sexual activity, with no apparent or implied consummation of it. All these speculative possibilities exist for the apparent lack of cognitive impact from exposure to soaps.

Another possible mediating factor is the uniform ratings of soap sex, love and marriage as unrealistic among both viewers and fans. Perhaps soaps are so outrageous in their fiction, that people who watch them consciously dismiss the cognitive component of most of what they see, and merely enjoy them.

The question remains whether individual sexual attitudes and/or values are influenced through soap portrayals. No available studies have attempted to link soap viewing to personal attitudes about sexual activity, marriage, divorce, abortion, etc. The beliefs examined here and by Buerkel-Rothfuss and Mayes enable a kind of remote response, i.e., what's the world like. This may be separable from what I value; what I want to do. Perhaps there is sufficiently strong identification and empathy with key soap characters regularly involved in sexual activities that fans adopt their mores, if not the behaviors themselves. Obtaining responses to those kinds of items is an even more difficult task; yet, if soaps continue to be alleged as a source of sexual values, rather than merely redundant with more dramatic sources, confirmatory evidence is extremely meager.

TABLE 1

SOAP VIEWING CHARACTERISTICS

	(n=71) Non-Viewer	(n=70) Viewer	(n=68) Fan
average number of soap episodes viewed per week	0	2.3	7.3*
average number different soaps per week	0	1.5	2.5*
overall hours of TV per day	.8	1.3	2.2*
% have own TV	63%	75%	87%*
% watch evening soaps	36	45	65 *
plan class schedule for soaps		11%	22%
soaps are very important[1]		1.6	2.2*
number of years watched soaps		6	5
try to find out what happened if an episode is missed		37%	61%
watch soaps alone		24%	20%

[1] 4=very important, 1=not important

*significantly different--$p < .05$

TABLE 2

PERCEIVED UTILITY AND REALITY OF SOAPS

Utility of Soap Content[1]	Viewer	Fan
overall	1.8	2.2*
sexual relationships	1.8	2.2*
romantic relationships	1.7	2.2*
family relationships	1.9	2.2
romantic problems	2.0	2.4
marriages	1.7	2.0
Reality of Soap Content[2]		
overall	2.5	2.5
extramarital sex	2.7	2.5
romantic relationships	2.5	2.3
marriages	2.4	2.4
families	2.3	2.7
housewives	2.5	2.3
career women	2.7	2.7
problems in general	2.5	2.6

(*indicates significant difference at $p < .05$)

1 5=very useful, 1=not very useful

2 5=very real, 1=not very real

TABLE 3

SALIENCE OF SEX

	Non-viewers	Viewers	Fans
# times average person thinks about sex in a day	9	8	9
# times average person talks about sex in a day	7	6	5
importance of sex[1]			
to teenagers	2.9	2.9	2.9
to adults	3.3	3.1	3.3
to society	3.1	3.3	3.3

1 categories were 1=not important, 4=very important

TABLE 4

WORLD-VIEW BELIEFS ABOUT SEX AND MARRIAGE

4a. Premarital and Extramarital Sex

	Non-viewers	Viewers	Fans
premarital sex			
% of single men engage in	81%	83%	85%
% of single women engage in	65	72	73
extramarital sex			
% of married men have affairs	40	41	42
% of married men would have affairs, given the opportunity	54	52	51
% of married career women have affairs	37	37	33
% of married housewives have affairs	29	28	33
% of married women would have affairs, given the opportunity	41	37	37

4b. Marital Optimism

	Non-viewers	Viewers	Fans
marriages last about ____ years	29	23	36*
% of marriages occur for love	72%	73%	76%
% of marriages end in divorce	40	45	40
% of married, successful career women have successful marriages	52	47	56
% of romances develop serious problems	68	68	64

4c. Pregnancy and Complications

	Non-viewers	Viewers	Fans
% of births illegitimate	21	23	22
% of marriages because of pregnancy	23	25	21
% of mothers die during childbirth	4	4	4
% of infants die at childbirth	7	9	7

*significantly different--$p < .05$

TABLE 5

SOCIAL PERMISSIVENESS

	Non-Viewer	Viewer	Fan
(Is our society becoming more permissive about:)			
divorce	99%[1]	93%	97%
premarital affairs	93	93	97
abortion	86	93	99
extramarital affairs	86	76	74
homosexuality	83	77	72
illegitimate births	74	78	75
prostitution	42	36	41
overall	80	78	79

1 (% yes)

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